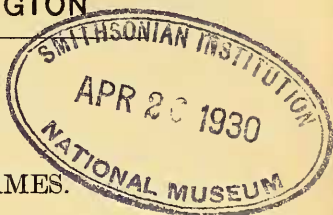


PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON



A RECENT MISUSE OF FAMILY NAMES.

BY E. R. DUNN.

In 1923 Baron G. J. Fejérváry published (Ann. Mus. Hungarici, 20, p. 178) a diagnosis of a new family of frogs. This family, *Ascaphidae*, was based on the single genus *Ascaphus* Stejneger, which he removed by his action from the family *Discoglossidae*. The family was defined and certain skeletal and muscular characters are mentioned.

According to Article 4 of the Code, *Ascaphus* is the type genus of this family, and according to Article 5, the name "is to be changed when the name of the type genus is changed," and by implication not to be changed unless the name of the type genus is changed.

In 1924 Dr. G. K. Noble (Amer. Mus. Novitates No. 132, p. 9), considering *Ascaphus* and *Liopelma* as together forming a family distinct from the *Discoglossidae* uses the name *Liopelmidae* as proposed by himself. He does not mention Fejérváry's previous action, although he was aware of it, as appears by the citation of the latter's paper in the list of references.

This action of Noble's is indefensible. He has not "changed the name of the type genus" and the fact that *Liopelma* is the older of the two genera is irrelevant, as the code nowhere gives the right to pick a new type genus.

Noble says that he follows "present day custom in using the oldest generic name in forming the family name," which is all very well, provided no names have yet been founded on any of the included genera, but this is very different from ignoring a previous name, and thus producing the impression that none had been given. On this basis we may expect soon to see the name *Euryceidae* Noble substituted for *Plethodontidae* Gray 1850 (*Eurycea* Rafinesque 1822; *Plethodon* Tschudi 1838). Other examples might be cited which could be changed on exactly the same principle as that on which Noble has discarded *Ascaphidae*. Yet these names are in general use, and sanctioned by high authority in nomenclatorial affairs.

Noble says further in dealing with a Neotropical group which he considers distinct from the *Leptodactylidae*, "I have erected" the family *Brachycephalidae*. Yet the authority for this family name is not Noble, but Gray, who proposed the name in 1856.